

T. 564. 13

THE
RAID OF FEATHERSTONEHAUGH;

A Border Ballad.

BY THE LATE R. SURTEES, ESQ.,

WITH REMARKS BY J. H. DIXON, ESQ.

NEWCASTLE:

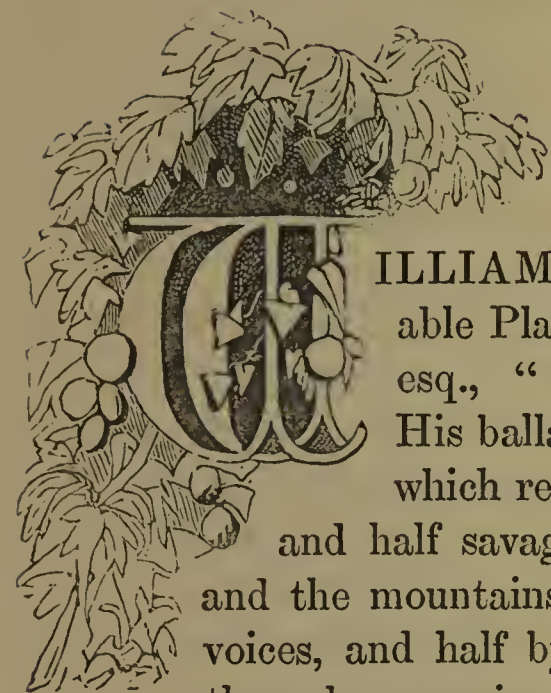
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MDCCCXLIV.



THE RAID OF FEATHERSTONEHAUGH.*

&c.



WILLIAM HOWITT in his "Visits to Remarkable Places," thus speaks of the late R. Surtees, esq., "Mr. Surtees was a poet of a high order. His ballads are full of a wild and solemn spirit, which recalls the dark days and doings of strange and half savage times; the spirit of the black heath and the mountains, and the dirge hymned half by beldame voices, and half by the midnight winds. With some of these he even imposed on Sir Walter Scott, who received them from him with exultation as genuine relics of antiquity, and not only printed them in his "Border Minstrelsy," but inserted them in the notes to his metrical romances, and even part of one, the *Raid of Featherstonehaugh*, in the text of *Marmion* itself." It was sometime since we had looked into our copy of *Marmion*, but the passage just quoted induced us to refer to it, and we find it as Howitt states, viz: that a verse of the *Raid of Featherstonehaugh* is inserted in *Marmion*, and the ballad given intire, in a note, as a genuine relic of antiquity! The passage in *Marmion* may be found in the first canto, verse 13, and is as follows:

"The whiles a northern harper rude

Chaunted a rhyme of deadly feud,

"*How the fierce Thirlwalls and Riddleys all,*

Stout Willimoteswick,

And Hard riding Dick.

And Hughie of Hawden, and Will o' the Wall,

Have set on Sir Albany Featherstonehaugh,

And taken his life at the Deadman's shaw."

Scantly Lord Marmion's ear could brook

The harper's barbarous lay," &c., &c.

* Called in the *Border Minstrelsy* of Scott, "The Death of Featherstonehaugh."

BARBAROUS indeed ! and withall so capital an imitation of “ quaint Inglis,” that we are not surprised at the success of the joke, though, one phrase in the ballad, viz : “ haud their jaw,”—might have almost induced an antiquary, to suspect its *modern* origin.

From what Sir W. Scott says of this “ veritable ” production, it appears to the world as having been *trebly* distilled, before it underwent the alembic of Abbotsford. An old woman of eighty recites it to an agent at the Alston mines ; he hands it to Mr. Surtees, and Mr. Surtees sends it to Scott, thus reminding one of the process mentioned in a passage of the song called “ Jack Robinson,” where

“ Somebody came one day, and said

That somebody else had somewhere read

In some newspaper,” &c., &c.

Sir Walter Scott thus writes. “ This old (*old!*) Northumbrian ballad was taken down from the recitation of a woman eighty years of age, mother of one of the miners in Alston Moor, by an agent of the lead mines there, who communicated it to my friend and correspondent, R. Surtees, Esq., of Mainsforth. She had not, she said, heard it for many years ; but when she was a girl, it used to be sung at merry-makings, ‘ till the roof rung again.’ To preserve this curious, though rude rhyme, it is here inserted. The ludicrous turn given to the slaughter, marks that wild and disorderly state of society, in which a murder was not merely a casual circumstance, but in some cases, an exceedingly good jest. The structure of the ballad resembles the ‘ Fray of Suport,’ having the same irregular stanza and wild chorus.” No doubt of the resemblance ! Mr. Surtees knew well enough what sort of a dish to set before the Magician of the North. But the wag-gish antiquary not only provides “ a dainty dish ” for the library table at Abbotsford, but sends with it “ a full, true, and particular ” account of its ingredients ! “ In explanation ” says Scott “ of this ancient ditty, Mr Surtees has furnished me with the following local memorandum—“ Willimoteswick, the chief seat of the ancient family of Ridley, is situated two miles above the confluence of the Allen and Tyne. It was a house of strength, as appears from one oblong tower, still in tolerable preservation. It has been long in the possession of the Blackett family. Hardriding Dick is not an epithet referring to horsemanship, but means Richard Ridley of Hardriding, the seat of another family of that name, which, in the time of Charles I., was sold on account of expences incurred by the loyalty of the proprietor, the immediate ancestor of Sir Matthew Ridley. Will of the Wa’ seems to be William Ridley of Waltown, so called from its situation on the great Roman wall. Thirlwall castle, whence the clan of Thirlwalls derived their name, is situated on the small river of Tippell

near the western boundary of Northumberland. It is near the wall, and takes its name from the rampart having been *thirled*, i. e. pierced, or breached, in its vicinity. Featherstone castle lies south of the Tyne, towards Alston Moor. Albany Featherstonehaugh, the chief of that ancient family, made a figure in the reign of Edward VI. A feud did certainly exist between the Riddleys and Featherstones,* productive of such consequences as the ballad narrates. “24 Oct. 22do. Henrici 8vi. Inquisitio capt. apud Hautwhistle, sup. visum corpus Alexandri Featherston, Gen. apud Grensilhaugh, felonice interfecti, 22 Oct. per Nicolaum Ridley de Unthanke, Gen. Hugon Ridle, Nicolaum Ridle, et alios ejusdem nominis.” Nor were the Featherstones without their revenge; for 36to Henrici 8vi. we have—*Utlagatio Nicolai Featherston, ac Thomæ Nyxson etc. etc. pro homicidio Will. Ridle de Morale.*”

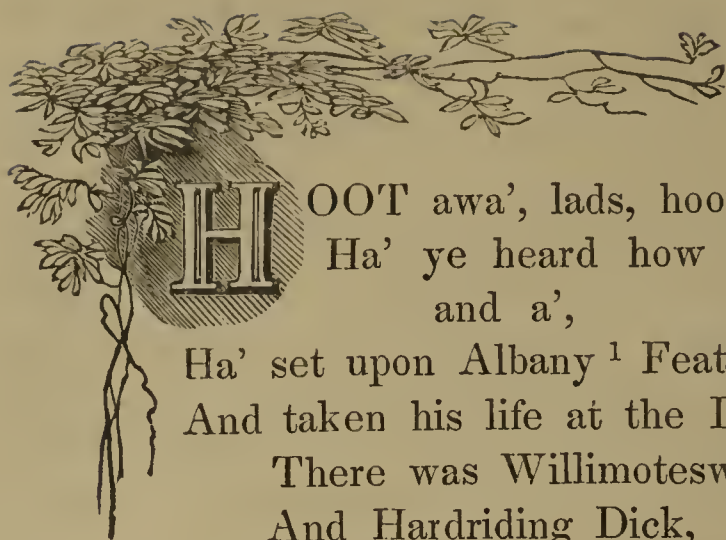
Such is the “local memorandum” received from Mr. Surtees by Scott, a “memorandum” written in a style equal to any annotation or explanation that ever emanated from old Rabelais, or from the modern Ingoldsby!

Thus much may be said, in extenuation of the literary fraud which was practised on Scott. Between Scott and Surtees there existed the greatest intimacy. No man was fonder of a good practical joke than the Border Poet, and the instances in which he palmed off his own rhymes as “old songs,” “old plays,” &c, were neither ‘few’ nor “far between.” Scott, we may imagine, had frequently, when in conversation with Surtees, laughed at these tricks, and we can fancy the good humoured historian saying to himself, “you’re a clever fellow, a capital hand at deceiving others, so I shall just try my hand on you!” How he *did* try, and how the joke succeeded, the reader is aware! That Surtees, ever for a moment, supposed that the “old song” would be ingrafted into Marmion, and form the subject of a note in a Metrical Romance, we do not believe, but it having, probably to his dread and surprise, appeared in such a “shape,” the historian no doubt thought it the best policy not to “question” it, dreading lest a breach of friendship might follow, or that the public at large might take up the affair in an ill-natured spirit, and attribute motives and designs to him, of which he was perfectly innocent.

The head and front of his offending
Was this———no more.—*Shakspeare.*

* The present descendants of the Featherstonehaughs generally so abbreviate their name.

1.



HOOT awa', lads, hoot awa',
 Ha' ye heard how the Riddleys, and Thirlwalls,
 and a',
 Ha' set upon Albany ¹ Featherstonhaugh,
 And taken his life at the Deadman's shaw?
 There was Willimoteswick,
 And Hardriding Dick,
 And Hughie of Hawden, and Will of the Wa'.
 I canno tell a', I canno tell a',
 And mony a mair that the deil may knaw.

II.

The auld man went down, but Nicol, his son,
 Run away afore the fight was begun;
 And he run, and he run,
 And afore they were done,
 There was mony a Featherston gat sic a stun,
 As never was seen since the world begun.

III.

I canno tell a', I canno tell a',
 Some gat a skelp,² and some gat a claw;
 But they gar'd the Featherstones haud their jaw,³
 Nicol, and Alick, and a'.
 Some gat a hurt, and some got nane;
 Some had harness, and some gat sta'en.⁴

IV.

Ane gat a twist o' the craig;⁵
 Ane gat a dunch⁶ o' the wame;⁷
 Symy Haw gat lamed of a leg,
 And syne ran wallowing⁸ hame.

¹ Pronounced *Awbony*.—W. Scott.

² Skelp—signifies *slap*, or rather is the same word which was originally spelled *schlap*.—Scott.

³ A vulgar expression still in use.—Scott.

⁴ Got stolen, or were plundered; a very likely termination to the fray.—Scott.

⁵ Neck.

⁶ Punch.

⁷ Belly.

⁸ Bellowing.

V.

Hoot, hoot, the auld man's slain outright!
 Lay him now wi' his face down:—he's a sorrowful sight.
 Janet, thou donnot,⁹
 I'll lay my best bonnet,
 Thou gets a new gude-man afore it be night.

VI.

Hoot away, lads hoot away,
 We's a' be hangid if we stay.
 Tak' up the dead man, and lay him ayint the bigging.
 Here's the Bailey o' Haltwhistle,¹⁰
 Wi' his great bull's pizzle,
 That supp'd up the broo', and syne——in the piggin.¹¹

⁹ Silly slut. The Border bard calls her so, because she was weeping for her slain husband; a loss which he seems to think might be soon repaired.—Scott.

¹⁰ The Bailiff of Haltwhistle seems to have arrived when the fray was over. This supporter of social order is treated with characteristic irreverence by the moss-trooping poet.—Scott.

¹¹ An iron pot with two ears.—Scott.

